

COOKING WITH POTATOES

DOROTHY PARKER



VISIT...

LANZAROTE
Caliente.COM

COOKING WITH POTATOES

DOROTHY PARKER



A-115



A Storey Country Wisdom Bulletin

Cooking with Potatoes

by Dorothy Parker

CONTENTS

About the Potato
Recipes

About the Potato

The primeval origins of the potato — one of the most important of the world's vegetables (in fact, more potatoes are grown worldwide than any other vegetable) are unknown to us; we can only speculate. But the first ones known to Westerners were discovered in the highlands of Peru, Bolivia, and Chile. The Spaniards came upon the potato among the Incans in the early 1500s and introduced it to Europe, where it was for a long time considered unfit for human consumption until it was “discovered” yet again by aristocratic British gourmets. (In sorry truth, so bad a reputation did the potato have that it was suspected of causing numerous diseases and, considered “unChristian,” sometimes even put on trial and burned at the stake.)

In 1663 the Royal Society of England recommended the potato as the answer to the famines that periodically ravaged Ireland, but what an answer it proved to be: Ireland became so dependent on the potato that the blight that struck it in 1846 caused the death by starvation of 600,000 people. In the early 18th century the Irish introduced the white potato into the United States — as fitting recognition of this great boon, it's known here as the Irish potato — and it has swelled in popularity. Today it is big agricultural business. Most are grown in California, Idaho, and Maine, but there isn't a state in the continental U.S. that doesn't raise it as a money crop — New York's Long Island, for one example.

Not a root vegetable, the tuber we call potato (*Solanum tuberosum*) is an underground stem, a member of the nightshade family, which includes tomato and eggplant. It is wonderfully nutritious, yielding an easily digestible source of protein, vitamin C, fiber, and trace minerals, besides the carbohydrate our myth-ridden grandparents worried about. Actually, potatoes are no more “fattening” than many fruits: one medium-size white potato contains about one hundred calories, the same as a large apple or orange. It is by all odds

one of the world's best values, from the standpoint of both nutrition and economy, not to mention sheer goodness.

Varieties

Varieties of the Irish or white-fleshed potato grown in the United States have some resonant names (Chippewa, Katahdin, Pontiac, and Russet Burbank being some), but for cooking purposes they divide into two general groups, distinguished in the markets as “all-purpose” or “baking” potatoes. (In these pages, if not designated “baking” or “new,” the potatoes specified are “all-purpose.”). Most bakers come from west of the Mississippi; two of the better-known California varieties are named White Rose and Shafter Whites.

The sweet potato (*Impomoea batatas*), an orange-fleshed member of the morning-glory family (unlikely as that may seem), grows in the American South. Here it is grown principally in two varieties: one has lighter-colored flesh that is denser and takes longer to cook; the other variety, of a deeper orange hue and less fibrous, is usually (though inaccurately) called yam. (The true yam, which originated in Africa, is seldom seen in this country.) A white-fleshed sweet potato is sometimes seen in tropical areas of the U.S. Yellow-fleshed potatoes, sometimes called Finnish, have recently been imported from Canada and Europe, but so far they are an oddity from the world of exotica and very expensive — more useful for talking about than for eating.

Whether you are shopping for large baking potatoes, all-purpose whites, sweets, or tiny new potatoes, always handle them in the market, turn them over, and examine them closely. Choose those that are firm and well shaped with an unmarred, unbroken skin. Avoid any with green “sunburn” spots. New potatoes should be cooked soon. The larger, older white or sweet potatoes will keep rather a long time in a cool, dry place and don't need your limited refrigerator space.

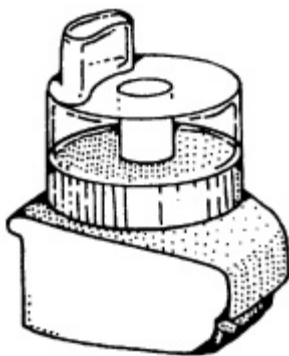
About this Bulletin

On equipment: If you have a food processor, you won't need this advice, but if not, the two pieces of

old-style special equipment I'd recommend are a squarish metal slicer-grater and a ricer. If you have a microwave, you will of course make your own adjustments; baking temperatures (in Fahrenheit) are for the traditional gas or electric oven.

On ingredients: In the interest of a healthful diet, I've used no cream, mayonnaise, butter (a "battered" griddle or baking dish means whatever light oil — or even spray — you customarily use), and few eggs (and fewer yolks). Other seasonings replace salt in cooking (with one "to taste" exception). No red meat, bacon only once, likewise ham. The oil used in cooking is almost invariably olive oil, because its flavor combines so well with potatoes, but naturally you may substitute whatever vegetable oil you prefer.

The potato is an incomparably versatile vegetable: It augments immeasurably soups, salads, and main dishes; it provides the basis for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, accompaniments for meat, fish, and fowl entrées — even wines and desserts. It is indispensable. And except for wine, you'll find in the pages that follow examples of all these uses.



Recipes

POTATO CHEESE SOUFFLÉ

A versatile dish suitable for breakfast, lunch, or dinner — or even an after-the-theatre, or midnight supper. In an earlier time, when we were likely to be heedless of such matters, this soufflé would have been made with heavy cream and whole eggs (and possibly even extra yolks; you will find that the “creamy” effect has not been diminished by the elimination of cream and all but one of the egg yolks.

3 or 4 large potatoes (about 2 pounds)

1 medium-size onion

3 tablespoons watercress

1 egg yolk

4 tablespoons margarine

3 tablespoons yogurt

3 tablespoons sour cream

½ cup crumbled goat cheese

½ teaspoon pepper

½ teaspoon paprika

½ teaspoon cumin

4 egg whites

Scrub the potatoes, halve them, and boil for about 20 minutes, or until they are tender. While they are boiling, peel and quarter the onion, then mince it. Mince the watercress. Beat the egg yolk lightly. Melt the margarine and let it cool.

Drain, cool, and peel the potatoes. Mash or put them through a ricer. In a large bowl, add to the potatoes the minced onion, cress, egg yolk, and margarine, blending well. Stir in the yogurt, sour cream, cheese, and spices, again mixing well.

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Beat the egg whites until stiff. Fold them into the potato mixture. Pour or spoon the soufflé mixture into a lightly buttered soufflé or baking dish. Bake for 40 to 45 minutes — until the soufflé is puffed up and pretty — and serve immediately.

YIELD: 5 TO 6 SERVINGS

Note on boiling potatoes: You may find that potatoes cook more quickly if you cover the pot, and some nutritionists claim that fewer nutrients are lost in cooking that way.

SWEET POTATO STUFFED APPLES

This is as good a moment as any to celebrate the wondrous flavor produced by combining apples and sweet potatoes. Be sure to leave a half inch or so of the apple flesh adhering to the skins when you hollow out the apples.

- 4 medium-size sweet potatoes**
- 2 tablespoons margarine**
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar**
- 1 teaspoon powdered clove**
- 4 large-size baking apples with skin intact**
- ¼ cup raisins**

Halve the potatoes and boil them for 20 minutes or until soft. Melt the margarine. Cool the potatoes, then peel them. Mash the potatoes with the melted margarine, the sugar, and the clove.

Remove cores and scoop out a cavity in each of the apples, taking care to leave at least a half-inch wall of apple flesh. Chop the removed apple flesh into small dice and stir them into the mashed potato mix. Stuff the apples with the potato mixture and add a few raisins to the top of each one. (If you have potato mix left over, press it into a custard cup and bake it separately.)

Put the stuffed apples into a lightly buttered pie plate or

baking dish and bake in a 325°F oven for 30 minutes or until the apple flesh is soft, and serve warm. (It is also good served cold.)

YIELD: 4 SERVINGS

POTATOES WITH GREEN BEANS AND TOMATO SAUCE

Here's a fine, bright, colorful potato dish that can be assembled handily, using frozen or canned ingredients and dried herbs.

3 or 4 medium-size potatoes, enough to make 1½ cups of dice

1 10-ounce package frozen French-cut green beans

1 bell pepper

1 clove garlic

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 10½-ounce can tomato sauce

1 teaspoon dried parsley

1 teaspoon dried basil

Wash the potatoes and boil them for 20 minutes, or until softened but still firm. Cool the potatoes, peel them, and cut them into 1-inch dice. Thaw the green beans and simmer them in ½ cup of water for 12 minutes, or until somewhat softened. Halve the pepper and cut away stem, seeds, and white membrane; cut it into ½-inch dice. Peel and mince the garlic (or put it through a garlic press).

Heat the olive oil in a saucepan over medium heat and sauté the pepper and garlic in it for 5 or 6 minutes. Add the tomato sauce and dried herbs, cover the saucepan, turn heat to low and cook for a half hour. Add the potato and green beans, re-cover the pan, and cook for 20 minutes more. Serve hot.

YIELD: 6 TO 8 SERVINGS

POTATO PANCAKES

Unless you have a food processor, for these pancakes (and the ones that follow them) you'll need a grater with a rather fine mesh. Potato pancakes are one of the world's true pleasures and worth any effort. Nothing sounds more humble and is in fact more noble.

4 medium-size potatoes

1 small onion

1 whole egg

½ teaspoon black pepper or nutmeg or both

4 tablespoons margarine or oil for frying

Peel the potatoes, wash them clean, and grate them rather fine. Now peel and grate the onion and add it to the potato, distributing well. Beat the egg lightly and add it, along with the seasonings, to the potato-onion mix. (Traditionally, no flour is added, but if you wish, for texture, sprinkle in ½ cup flour.)

On a griddle or fry pan over high heat, melt the margarine (or add the oil). Turn the heat to medium, add the pancake mixture to it by tablespoonful, and fry them on one side until browned, then on the other side until browned. Serve with a bit of confectioner's sugar.

YIELD: 10 TO 12 PANCAKES

GARLICKY POTATO-ZUCCHINI PANCAKES

Now that you've made latkes (potato pancakes) plain and simple, try a variation on them. The presence of garlic adds a certain dash, but of course onion or shallot can be substituted if garlic is, for some sad reason, on your verboten list.

4 medium-size potatoes (about 1½ pounds)

2 medium-size (or 3 small) zucchini

1 garlic clove

3 tablespoons flour, white or whole wheat (or half-and-half)

½ teaspoon baking powder

½ teaspoon pepper

- ½ teaspoon nutmeg**
- 2 whole eggs (or 1 yolk and 2 whites)**
- ½ cup plain yogurt**
- 4 tablespoons oil for frying**

Peel and grate the potatoes; grate the zucchini; peel and chop the garlic very fine (or put it through a garlic press). Mix these vegetables well. Combine the flour, baking powder, pepper, and nutmeg. Beat the eggs lightly in a large bowl; stir in the yogurt. To this mixture add the vegetables and flour mixture, stirring to combine well.

On a griddle or fry pan over high heat, heat the oil. Turn the heat to medium and add the pancake batter to it by tablespoonful, three or four at a time. Press them into pancake shape with a spatula and fry until crisp on both sides. Serve with a bit of maple syrup.

YIELD: 16 TO 18 PANCAKES

BRAISED POTATOES AND ARTICHOKEs

Don't be fooled — this may sound like an unlikely combination, but it's an absolutely superb dish.

- 3 or 4 medium-size potatoes lemon juice**
- 2 medium-size artichokes**
- 1 small onion**
- 1 garlic clove (or 1/8 teaspoon garlic powder)**
- 4 tablespoons olive oil**
- 1 teaspoon pepper**
- 1 tablespoon chopped parsley**
- ½ cup white wine**

Peel the potatoes and wash them. Cut them into french-fry type sticks; dip them in lemon juice and set aside. Trim from the artichokes their hard outer leaves, tips of the other leaves and stems. Cut them into wedges and remove the chokes and papery inner leaves. Dip the wedges in lemon juice and set

aside.

Peel and chop the onion; peel and mince the garlic. In a fry pan over medium heat, sauté the onion until translucent, then add the garlic and sauté until it browns. Add the potatoes and artichokes, the pepper, and the parsley; sauté 5 or 6 minutes more, turning the vegetables frequently.

Empty the fry pan into a small baking dish, add the wine, cover the dish, and bake in a 350°F oven for 50 minutes to an hour, until vegetables are tender. Check once or twice during the cooking to see if all the liquid has been absorbed; if necessary, add a little water. Serve hot.

YIELD: 4 OR 5 SERVINGS

TWO-TONED SCALLOPED POTATOES

A handsome repast that for best effect should be presented by going all the way to the bottom of the dish each time you scoop out a serving.

- 3 medium-size white potatoes**
- 3 medium-size sweet potatoes**
- 1 small onion**
- ¼ cup chopped black olives**
- 1 cup grated cheddar cheese**
- 1 teaspoon paprika**
- 1 cup toasted bread crumbs**
- 2 tablespoons margarine**
- 1 cup milk**

Peel both white and sweet potatoes and slice them very thin; ditto the onion. In a buttered baking dish, arrange the potatoes, onions, olives, cheese, and paprika in layers, sprinkling the crumbs and dotting the margarine around each layer. Taking care not to dislodge the olive bits, pour the milk over.

Cover the dish and bake it in a 375°F oven for 1 hour. Now

remove the cover and leave the dish under the broiler for 3 to 5 minutes to brown the top.

YIELD: 4 TO 6 SERVINGS

Note: An interesting flavor variation is achieved by substituting for the cheddar $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of crumbled blue cheese.

POTATO-CHARD GRATIN

A combination marked by rich tones and subtle flavors. If chard is not your favorite green leafy, use spinach in its place.

- 6 medium-size potatoes**
- 1 large onion**
- 12 or 14 leaves of Swiss chard, with stems removed**
fresh basil leaves (enough to make 1 cup chopped)
- 1 bunch cilantro (enough to make $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped)**
- 4 tablespoons olive oil**
- 3 cups milk**
- 1 cup toasted bread crumbs**
- 3 tablespoons margarine**

Wash and peel the potatoes, and slice them very thin. Peel and chop the onion. Rinse the Swiss chard in cool water, then chop it fine. Chop the basil and cilantro.

In a fry pan, heat the oil over medium heat and sauté the onion until softened. Add the chard, basil, and cilantro and heat until the greens wilt. Spread half the sliced potato in the bottom of a buttered baking dish. Spread the mixed greens over the potato slices. Make another layer with the rest of the sliced potatoes. Pour the milk over, cover the surface with bread crumbs, and dot the crumbs with the margarine.

Bake the dish, covered, in a 350°F oven for 50 minutes. Then uncover and leave the baking dish under the broiler for 3 to 5 minutes to brown the surface. Serve hot.

YIELD: 6 TO 8 SERVINGS

POTATO STUFFED PEPPERS

Rice and ground beef is not the only formula for a well-stuffed pepper: as an alternative, potato, mushrooms, and red onion serves beautifully. (For this recipe I'm assuming some of yesterday's mashed potato.)

- 2½ cups mashed potato**
- 4 bell peppers**
- 8 or 10 fresh mushrooms**
- 1 medium-size red onion**
- 3 tablespoons olive oil**
- 2 cups tomato juice**
- 3 tablespoons fresh minced parsley**
- 3 tablespoons dried thyme**
- ½ teaspoon black pepper**
- 1 cup red wine**
- 3 tablespoons grated fontina cheese**

Cut the tops off the peppers and remove seeds and white membranes. Chop all the mushrooms except for four caps. Peel and chop the onion fine. Heat 1 tablespoon of the olive oil in a large saucepan over medium heat; sauté the mushrooms (except for the caps) and onion in it until the onion softens.

Remove the saucepan from the heat and add it to the mashed potatoes and 2 tablespoons of the tomato juice, blending the mixture well. Stuff the peppers with this mixture, topping each one with a mushroom cap. (If any potato mixture remains, press it into a buttered custard cup and bake it separately.)

Put ½ inch water in the bottom of a shallow baking dish. Place the stuffed peppers in the dish and bake in a 300°F oven for 70 minutes. Baste the peppers several times in this period, adding more water if needed.

Meanwhile, combine the remaining tablespoon of olive oil, the parsley, thyme, and black pepper with the remaining

tomato juice in a small saucepan and simmer, covered, over low heat for 60 minutes. Add the red wine for the last 5 minutes.

Serve the peppers with this sauce poured over them, sprinkling each stuffed pepper with the grated cheese.

YIELD: 4 SERVINGS

FRIED POTATO SKINS

The only recipe in this collection that comes anywhere near the familiar fast-food staple french fries is this one —and no deep fat to clog your veins with cholesterol. I hope you’ve saved the peelings from any number of peeled-potato dishes and now have them ready for this treat.

2 cups of potato skins
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
salt to taste

Cut the potato skins into manageable pieces (perhaps 1-inch). Heat the oil (canola would be good) over high heat in a fry pan, add the potato skins, and stir them until they are brown and crisp. Drain them on paper towels, sprinkle them with salt (or another spice if you are watching your salt intake), and think how much better this goody is for you than “a side of french fries.”

Note: There’s another way to do this: just spread the skins with margarine and broil them into crispness.

YIELD: 3 OR 4 SERVINGS

NEW ENGLAND POTATO-CORN CHOWDER

There are at least as many ways to fashion this chowder as there are people who cook in New England — or anywhere else, for that matter, as the dish has passed into the nation’s culinary treasure house. The texture of the cooked potatoes is of key importance, and here’s a reliable way to achieve the proper

consistency.

- 5 or 6 medium-size potatoes**
- 3 strips bacon**
- 1 medium-size onion**
- 3 small stalks celery with tops**
- 2 cups milk**
- 1 10-ounce can evaporated milk**
- 2 cups corn kernels**
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese**
- ½ teaspoon paprika**

Wash the potatoes and peel them. Cut them into 1-inch cubes and cover them with cold water to which a teaspoon of vinegar has been added. In a soup kettle (with a cover) fry the bacon over medium heat until it is crisp. Let the bacon drain on a paper towel.

Peel and chop the onion; chop the celery, including the leafy tops. Sauté the onion and celery in the rendered bacon fat in the kettle for 3 or 4 minutes, or until they start to soften. Drain the potatoes and sauté them, turning them several times, for 8 to 10 minutes, adding a bit of vegetable oil if necessary.

Add the milk and evaporated milk to the kettle, cover it and turn the heat down low. Simmer for 20 minutes, or until the potatoes are tender but not mushy-soft. Stir in the corn in the last 5 minutes, along with the cheese and paprika.

Serve the chowder hot, with bacon crumbled on the surface of each serving.

YIELD: 4 TO 6 SERVINGS

Note: This can easily be turned into a shellfish chowder by adding a half cup or more of chopped clams, quahogs, scallops, or crabmeat.

RED POTATO SALAD

Potato salad comes in innumerable styles, variations, and national and ethnic cuisines — it is, truly, a universal dish. Here is one using small red-skinned potatoes.

12 to 16 tiny red-skinned new potatoes (about 2½ pounds)

6 tablespoons olive oil

3 tablespoons vinegar

2 tablespoons red wine

1 small or medium red onion

5 or 6 red radishes

1½ tablespoons sour cream

1½ tablespoons plain yogurt

1 teaspoon French-style mustard

1 tablespoon chopped chives

1 tablespoon chopped parsley

Wash the potatoes and cook them, unpeeled, in boiling water about 15 minutes, or until just tender. Cool the potatoes, halve them, and cut the larger ones (if any) into bite-size pieces. Make a dressing of the olive oil, vinegar, and wine; toss the potatoes in this dressing and let stand for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, peel and chop the onion, but not too fine. Slice the radishes thin. Combine the sour cream, yogurt, and mustard and stir in the onion and radishes, distributing well. Drain the potatoes, reserving the dressing for another salad.

Combine the potatoes and the other ingredients by tossing again, gently. Serve salad warm or cool, sprinkled with the chives and parsley.

YIELD: 6 TO 8 SERVINGS

SPICY BLACK-AND-WHITE POTATO SALAD

Some like it hot, and here is a rather more savory salad made by a slightly different method for a very different taste.

4 or 5 medium-size new potatoes (about 2 pounds)

1 large stalk celery

4 to 6 scallions

2 tablespoons margarine

1 tablespoon olive oil

½ teaspoon each: chili powder, coriander

¼ teaspoon each: ginger, cumin, allspice

4 or 5 green olives

½ cup raisins

½ avocado, old enough to be very soft

1 cup plain yogurt

Cook the potatoes, unpeeled, in boiling water for 20 minutes, or until just tender. Drain and cool them, then peel and cut into 1-inch dice. Chop the celery into small pieces, including the leaves. Trim the scallions and chop them (not too fine).

In a fry pan over medium heat, melt the margarine; add to it the olive oil. Sauté the scallions, stirring for a minute or two, until they are softened. Add all the spices and turn off the heat. Stir in the potato dice and the celery, toss them to coat them well. Transfer all to a chilled bowl.

Chop the olives and raisins. Scoop the avocado meat out of the shell and mash it. Stir olives, raisins, and avocado mash into the yogurt, blending well. Stir this sauce into the bowl, distributing the scallions and potatoes well, and serve cold.

YIELD: 4 TO 6 SERVINGS

POTATO AND LEEK SOUP

These two vegetables, whose modest appearance belies their deep goodness, have been considered a happy marriage for centuries in many cultures. Here they blend into an unforgettable soup that is as nourishing as it is savory.

3 or 4 medium-size potatoes

- 2 quarts light chicken broth**
- 1 large leek**
- ¼ cup chopped parsley**
- 2 tablespoons powdered mustard**
- 1 tablespoon white wine**
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce (if desired, for taste)**
- ½ teaspoon black pepper**

Peel the potatoes and slice them as thin as possible. Cut roots and top off the leek; wash it and chop it very fine. In a large kettle, heat the broth to a simmer, add the potatoes and cook them until soft. Add the leek and parsley and simmer for 15 minutes. Add the mustard, wine, soy sauce, and pepper and simmer another 15 minutes. Serve hot.

YIELD: 2 QUARTS

Note: This soup, traditionally served hot, can also be served cold (it's related to vichyssoise). A good trick for a summer luncheon is to put the soup, when cooled, through the blender for a few seconds, then chill it in the refrigerator for an hour and serve it with a couple of mint leaves floating on the top.

POTATO AND LEEK PIE

Here's another potato-leek union, this time a nondessert pie. Try making the pie shell of graham cracker crumbs and melted butter or margarine rather than of pastry crust.

- 3 or 4 medium-size potatoes (enough to make 2 cups mashed)**
- 2 large leeks**
- 2 tablespoons margarine**
- 2 eggs**
- ¾ pound ricotta**
- ¼ cup sour cream.**
- ¼ cup plain yogurt**
- ¼ cup milk**

2 teaspoons paprika

1 9- or 10-inch pie shell

3 tablespoons grated Parmesan or Romano cheese

Peel, cut up, and boil the potatoes until soft, then mash or put them through a ricer. Prepare the leeks by cutting off roots and tops. Wash the leek leaves, cut them into rings, and wash again; pat dry with paper towel. Melt the margarine in a fry pan and sauté the leeks until softened.

In a large bowl, beat the eggs lightly, then blend in the ricotta (by hand or in a blender). When the mixture is smooth, stir or blend in the mashed potato, sour cream, yogurt, milk, and paprika. Stir in the leeks, distributing well.

Spoon the mixture into the pie shell, top with grated cheese, and bake in a 350°F oven for about 45 minutes, or until the top is browned. This dish can be served hot, warm, or cold.

YIELD: 6 OR 8 CUTS OF PIE

POTATO GNOCCHI

No matter how marginally, surely most of us have been influenced by Italian cuisine, a stellar element of which is gnocchi. Here is one of its basic forms, and it uses one of the egg yolks you didn't put into the Potato Cheese Soufflé.

3 or 4 large potatoes

1 cup white flour

1 cup grated Parmesan cheese

1 teaspoon curry powder

1 cup margarine

1 whole egg plus 1 extra yolk

Cook the unpeeled potatoes in boiling water for 25 minutes, or until tender (not soft). Drain, cool, and peel the potatoes. Mash or put them through a ricer. Add to the potatoes the flour, half a cup of Parmesan, and the curry

powder, kneading it into a smooth mixture.

Melt the margarine and let it cool. Beat the eggs lightly and stir them into the dough. Then stir in the cooled margarine and work it with your fingers into a smooth dough, adding a bit more flour if necessary to keep the dough from being too sticky.

Divide the dough into four parts and roll each part into a cylinder. With a knife dipped in cool water, cut the cylinders into 1-inch pieces.

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

Bring 5 or 6 quarts of water to a boil in a deep pot. Drop in the gnocchi a few at a time, cooking each batch about 5 minutes. When they rise to the surface, remove them with a slotted spoon and arrange them without touching one another in a buttered baking dish.

Sprinkle the gnocchi with the remaining half cup of Parmesan and bake them for 15 to 20 minutes, or until heated through.

YIELD: 6 TO 8 SERVINGS

POTATO-CARROT TIMBALE

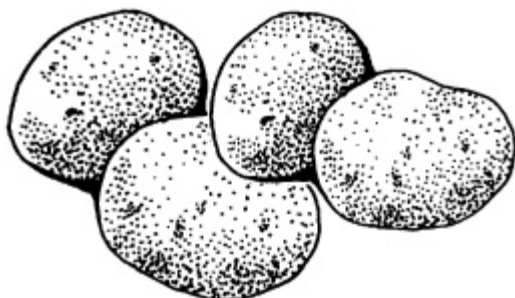
Potatoes, being so miraculously adaptable, combine well with many root vegetables; but this baked dish is particularly enticing as well as handsome — especially if one of your favorite colors is orange.

- 4 or 5 medium-size carrots**
- 3 medium-size potatoes**
- 2 egg whites**
- ¼ cup ricotta (or cottage cheese)**
- ½ cup milk**
- ¼ teaspoon powdered ginger**
- 1 teaspoon dill**

Scrape the carrots, peel the potatoes, then cut both into match-stick-size pieces. Lightly butter a baking dish (with a cover) and make a layer of half the carrot sticks on the bottom. Layer half the potato sticks on top of the carrots, laying them crosswise. Repeat these two steps with the rest of the carrots and potato sticks.

Mix the egg whites, ricotta, milk, and ginger by hand or in a blender. Pour the mixture over the vegetables and sprinkle the dill on top. Cover the baking dish and bake in a 300°F oven for 50 minutes to an hour, or until the vegetables are soft.

YIELD: 4 OR 5 SERVINGS



POTATO BREAD

Make mashed potatoes without the usual flavorings, and then make this bread — a solid loaf that toasts well and tastes good.

- ½ pound white potatoes (about 1 cup mashed)**
- 1 cup potato water**
- 2 packets active dry yeast (about 2 tablespoons)**
- 2 tablespoons sugar**
- 2 cups milk, warmed to the scalding point and cooled**
- 3 tablespoons safflower or canola oil, plus more for oiling**
- 3 teaspoons salt**
- 8 cups unbleached all-purpose flour**
- 2 tablespoons caraway seeds**

3 tablespoons finely snipped fresh chives

Peel and boil the potatoes until tender. Drain, reserving a cup of the cooking water, and mash the potatoes. Set aside to cool.

Dissolve the yeast in the tepid potato water and let stand about 3 minutes. Add the mashed potatoes, sugar, milk, oil, salt, and 4 cups of the flour. Beat until smooth.

Add the caraway seeds and the rest of the flour, or as much as is needed to make a fairly stiff dough.

Sprinkle the chives over the dough. On a lightly floured surface, knead until it is smooth and elastic, at least 10 minutes. Place in an oiled bowl, turning to coat the dough on all sides, and let rise until doubled in bulk (about an hour).

Punch down the dough, knead a few times, and shape or braid into three loaves. Place in greased pans and let rise again until double in bulk.

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Bake for 40 minutes.

YIELD: 3 LOAVES

This recipe was excerpted from *Herbal Breads* by Ruth Bass (Storey Publishing, 1996).

The Perfectly Baked Potato

Whether it comes from Idaho, California, or some other part of these bountiful United States, there is nothing quite like a perfectly baked potato, its skin crunchy brown, cut open to reveal the succulent white flesh within a dollop of butter dissolving ecstatically in its warm depths.

Preparing potatoes for baking is easy: scrub the skins clean, prick them all over, and insert a trussing needle, skewer, or baking nail down the middle of each potato the long way. If you prefer a soft skin to a

crunchy one, oil or butter the skin before baking, but *don't* wrap them in foil. A medium-size baker will be perfectly baked in the conventional oven in 1¼ hours at 350°F, 1 hour at 400°F, or 45 minutes at 450°F. The larger the potato, the longer the time. And of course the microwave is an entirely different matter.

Here's a baker's dozen suggestions for toppings for the perfectly baked potato, starting with the classic . . .

- Sour Cream and Chopped Chives
- Mashed Avocado and Minced Garlic
- Capers and Bacobits
- Yogurt Spiced with Cumin, Ginger, Celery Seed
- Sour Cream and Red Caviar
- Chopped Eggplant and Pine Nuts (browned in olive oil)
- Yogurt and a dab of Anchovy Paste
- Minced Yellow and Green Sweet Peppers
- Chopped Walnuts and Sunflower Seeds
- Raisins and a dab of Peanut Butter
- Yogurt and Chopped Prunes
- Minced Sausage — the spicier the better
- Crumbled Blue Cheese and Minced Parsley

HALF BAKED POTATOES

The slightly nutty taste of chickpeas blends well with potato, but you might want to substitute some other legume: pea beans, for example, or pinto beans or black-eyed peas.

- 4 large well-shaped baking potatoes**
- 2 scallions**
- 1 tablespoon olive oil**
- 1 cup chickpeas (right from the can, but drained of liquid)**
- ½ cup sesame seeds**

1 cup shredded Romano or Pecorino cheese

Clean the potatoes and bake them to well done (see page 20). Meanwhile, remove tops and roots from the scallions and chop them into rather small pieces. Warm the olive oil in a fry pan over medium heat and sauté the scallions until they soften. Mash the chickpeas.

When the potatoes are baked, cool them. Cut them in halves, lengthwise, and scoop out the potato, leaving the skins intact. Blend the chickpea mash with the scooped-out potato. Add the sautéed scallions and the sesame seed, stirring to distribute well.

Fill each half potato skin well with this mixture, mounding it slightly. Sprinkle the tops with the shredded cheese and return them to the oven — for 15 minutes at 375°F. They should be served with the cheese hot and bubbling.

YIELD: 4 SERVINGS (OR 8 SERVINGS AT ½ POTATO EACH)

POTATO CHESTNUT PURÉE

This creamy purée makes an excellent topping or accompaniment for meat or poultry, or rather bland cooked vegetables such as summer squash. Or just to eat, lipsmackingly, by itself.

4 or 5 medium-size potatoes

1 pound of chestnuts

2 or 3 garlic cloves

3 cups chicken broth

5 tablespoons margarine

½ cup milk

¼ cup yogurt

¼ cup sour cream

⅛ teaspoon nutmeg or mace

4 or 5 shallots

Wash and boil the potatoes until tender. Cool and peel them and put them through a ricer.

Preheat the oven to 425°F.

Score the chestnuts and roast them for about 10 minutes, or until the shells crack. Cool the chestnuts and remove the outer shells, then peel off the skins. (As an alternative to this labor, you can buy a can of chestnuts at your local epicure shop.)

Peel and slice the garlic cloves. Bring the broth to a boil in a saucepan, turn the heat down, and simmer the chestnuts and garlic, covered, for ½ hour, or until the chestnuts are tender. Drain the chestnuts, discarding water and garlic, and push the chestnuts through a sieve (or purée them in a blender or food processor).

In a large saucepan, combine the mashed potatoes, chestnuts, 4 tablespoons of the margarine, the milk, yogurt and sour cream, and nutmeg. In a separate small fry pan, melt the remaining tablespoon of margarine.

Peel and chop the shallots quite fine and sauté them in the fry pan over medium heat until they are soft, not browned. Now stir the shallots into the purée in the saucepan. Stir the purée over low heat, just until it is heated through, and serve warm.

YIELD: ABOUT 1 QUART

POTATO PIZZA

This is not a starchy, doughy dish with potatoes added, but rather a traditional pizza in which potatoes provide the crust. It's as easy as mashed potatoes, which is what you start with.

4 to 5 medium-size potatoes (about 2 pounds)

¼ cup olive oil

2 tablespoons toasted bread crumbs

¼ cup shredded mozzarella cheese

- 1/4 cup grated Romano cheese**
- 1 cup diced fresh tomatoes**
- 1 teaspoon oregano**

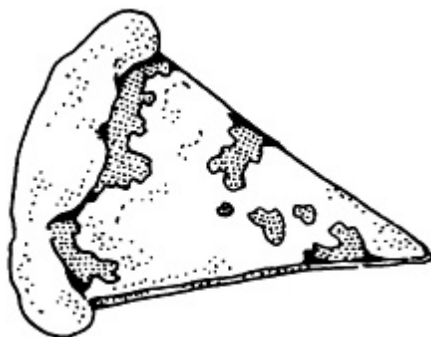
Wash and boil the potatoes, unpeeled, until they are tender. Mash them or put them through a ricer, then stir in 3 tablespoons of the olive oil.

Butter a pizza pan very lightly, then sprinkle it with the bread crumbs. Spread the potato into a large, thin pancake on the pan, forming a thicker edge with your fingers. Sprinkle the mozzarella and Romano on the potato crust, distributing the cheese evenly; then add the tomato dice and the oregano.

Preheat the oven to 450°F.

Drizzle the remaining olive oil over the pizza, and bake it in the oven for 20 minutes, or until the potato crust is golden at the edges.

YIELD: 4 TO 6 CUTS OF PIZZA



POTATOES AND BROCCOLI IN CHEESY TOMATO SAUCE

Multicolored, nourishing, and delicious — good to behold and even better to eat — in this casserole, a complete meal in one dish.

- 6 medium-size potatoes**
- 2 cups broccoli florets**

- 3 firm ripe tomatoes**
- 4 scallions**
- 2 tablespoons margarine**
- 1 tablespoon olive oil**
- ½ teaspoon cumin**
- ½ teaspoon coriander**
- ¼ teaspoon pepper**
- 1 cup grated Grùyere or Swiss cheese**

Boil the potatoes for 20 minutes, or until tender. Drain and cool them, then peel and quarter them. Put them in a lightly buttered baking dish in a warm oven. Steam the broccoli florets until they are *al dente* and add them to the potatoes.

Peel and chop the tomatoes into 1-inch chunks. Trim and chop the scallions into ½-inch pieces.

In a fry pan over medium heat, melt the margarine and stir in the olive oil. Sauté the scallions for 2 or 3 minutes. Stir in the tomatoes and the spices; simmer for 10 minutes, or until the sauce starts to thicken. Add the cheese, little by little, stirring, until it has melted. Pour the sauce over the potatoes and broccoli and serve warm.

YIELD: 4 TO 6 SERVINGS

FANCY ROASTED POTATOES, ONIONS, AND MUSHROOMS

What makes these roasted potatoes “fancy” is not some exotic cooking method but simply the manner of peeling them. (The choice of oil is a bit fancy too, so to speak, but now and again one of these expensive oils will make a significant difference in taste — an enhancement well worth the expense — and this is one of those times.)

- 8 medium-size onions**
- 5 or 6 medium-size red-skinned potatoes**
- 8 to 10 fresh mushrooms**

3 tablespoons walnut or hazelnut oil

3 tablespoons vinegar

½ teaspoon pepper

8 to 10 sprigs of fresh thyme

Peel the onions and leave them whole. Wash the potatoes and, with a potato peeler, cut away a spiral of skin ¼ inch wide, leaving a similar band in place on each potato. This design not only looks interesting, but it allows the vinaigrette to soak into the potatoes).

Slice the mushrooms. Put the onions, potatoes, and mushrooms in a baking dish (with a cover). Combine the oil, vinegar, and pepper and pour it over the vegetables. Scatter the thyme among the vegetables.

Cover the baking dish and bake it in a 350°F oven for 1¾ hours, gently stirring every 20 minutes or so to recoat the vegetables.

YIELD: 4 TO 6 SERVINGS

Note: These vegetables, roasted a rich brown color, will nicely complement a light-colored fish or poultry entrée.

HAM-YAM CASSEROLE

There is a special affinity between ham and the variety of sweet potato we call yam — they were meant for each other — and something very satisfying about this supper dish.

**3 or 4 medium-size yams (enough to make 2½ cups
mashed)**

7 tablespoons margarine

1 whole egg plus 1 extra white

1 teaspoon nutmeg

1 teaspoon cinnamon

1 cup milk

1 medium-size hamsteak (enough to make 1 cup

cubed)

2 large apples

1 cup bread crumbs

Boil the yams, unpeeled, for 20 minutes, or until soft. Cool them, peel them, and mash them. Melt 4 tablespoons of the margarine and cool it. Beat the eggs lightly. Mix the yams, margarine, and eggs plus the spices and milk, blending until the mixture is fluffy.

Cut the ham into ½-inch cubes. Core, peel, and cut the apples into thin slices. Stir the ham cubes into the yam mixture, distributing well.

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

Spoon the mixture into a lightly buttered baking dish and arrange the apple slices on top. Sprinkle the bread crumbs over the apple slices, then dot the surface with the remaining 3 tablespoons of margarine. Bake for 25 minutes and serve warm.

YIELD: 4 TO 6 SERVINGS

CURRIED POTATOES, CAULIFLOWER, AND PEAS

A wonderful vegetable combination that is made piquant by the curry sauce. It will taste fine as soon as you've cooked it, and even better the next day.

5 or 6 medium-size potatoes

2 tablespoons olive oil

2 medium-size onions

2 garlic cloves

4 tablespoons curry powder

1 cup tomato sauce

2 cups chicken broth

4 cups cauliflower florets

1 cup yogurt

2 cups petite peas, uncooked

Peel the potatoes and cut them into 1-inch dice. Heat 1 tablespoon of the olive oil in a fry pan over medium heat. Cook the potatoes in the oil, stirring occasionally, for 10 minutes, or until they are slightly browned. Remove the potatoes and set them aside.

Peel the onions and chop as fine as possible. Peel and mince the garlic. Heat the other tablespoon of oil in the frypan and cook the onions and garlic, stirring constantly, for 10 minutes, or until they are nicely browned. Stir in the curry powder, tomato sauce, and chicken broth; cook another minute or two, stirring.

Add the set-aside potatoes to the pan, then the cauliflower and the yogurt. Mix all together well. Turn the heat to low, cover the pan, and simmer, stirring occasionally, for about 25 minutes, or until the potatoes and cauliflower are cooked to a desired consistency.

Stir in the peas and simmer 5 or 6 minutes more. Serve the dish hot.

YIELD: 8 TO 10 SERVINGS

POTATO AND ONION SAUTÉ

There is hardly a country in the world — including most parts of the United States — where this basic dish isn't part of the folk cuisine. In France potatoes treated this way are exalted by the term Lyonnaise. In the Massachusetts offshore islands of my childhood it was called "Scootin' Along the Shore," for what reason I don't know. Call it what you will, but by whatever moniker, this will always remain a simple, quick, and soul-satisfying dish. I myself make it from leftover boiled potatoes, abut there's no reason you can't start from scratch.

3 medium-size potatoes

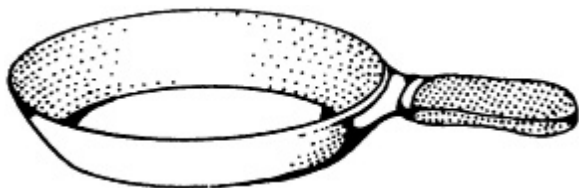
1 medium-size onion

3 tablespoons margarine

1 tablespoon your favorite herb (I usually use oregano or basil)

Peel and boil the potatoes until soft but not mushy and cut them into dice. Peel and chop the onion. Melt the margarine in a fry pan over medium heat; add the vegetables and herb, and cook for about 10 minutes, stirring and turning and chopping with a wooden spatula, until some pieces of brown crust appear. Serve warm.

YIELD: 3 OR 4 SERVINGS



POTATO BEET HASH

In the vernacular often called “Red Flannel Hash,” this is a true “country” way to use up some leftover boiled potatoes, or the Potato-Onion Sauté you didn’t finish last night (or deliberately saved for this purpose) — if you also happen to have some leftover cooked beets.

1½ cups coarsely chopped cooked beets
1½ cups coarsely chopped cooked potatoes
1 small or ½ large onion
3 tablespoons margarine
1/3 cup milk
salt and pepper to taste

Peel and chop the onion. In a fry pan over medium heat, melt the margarine. Add the onion, beets, and potatoes and sauté a little.

Turn the heat down to low. Add the milk and salt and pepper and cook, stirring and chopping now and then (with a wooden spatula if you have one) until a brown crust forms.

Serve the hash hot.

YIELD: 4 OR 5 SERVINGS

SAUTÉED NEW POTATOES WITH HORSERADISH SAUCE

Tiny, delicate new potatoes, whether brown- or red-skinned, should be cooked right away, not kept for days or weeks. Be sure you have potatoes with perfect skins for this wonderfully tasty dish.

12 to 16 small new potatoes of regular size (about 2 pounds)

2 tablespoons margarine

2 tablespoons olive oil

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup milk

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup yogurt

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sour cream

1 tablespoon arrowroot

2 tablespoons horseradish

1 teaspoon chopped fresh chives

1 teaspoon each dried chervil, parsley, rosemary

Wash the new potatoes, taking care not to damage the skins, and let them dry. Melt the margarine in a fry pan over medium heat and stir in the olive oil. Sauté the potatoes in this mixture, shaking the pan and turning them often, for about 20 minutes.

With a slotted spoon, remove the potatoes to a warm serving dish and leave it in a warm (not hot) oven.

Mix the milk, yogurt, sour cream, arrowroot, horseradish, chives, and dried herbs, blending well. In the fry pan over low heat, stir this mixture until the sauce begins to thicken. Pour it over the sautéed potatoes and serve warm.

YIELD: 4 TO 6 SERVINGS

SWEET POTATO CUSTARD PIE

In which classic sweet potatoes merge with custard to produce a lovely dessert.

- 2 medium-size sweet potatoes**
- ½ cup margarine**
- ½ cup honey or maple syrup**
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch or arrowroot**
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon**
- 2 whole eggs plus 1 extra white**
- 1 5¾-ounce can evaporated milk**
- 1 teaspoon vanilla**
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice**
- 1 9- or 10-inch unbaked pie shell**

Scrub and boil the potatoes for 25 minutes, or until they are soft. Cool and peel the potatoes, then mash them. Melt the margarine and stir it into the mashed potato, along with the honey or maple syrup.

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Combine the cornstarch (or arrowroot) and cinnamon; stir this mixture into the potato mash. Lightly beat the eggs, including the extra white, and stir them into the mixture. Stir in the evaporated milk, vanilla, and lemon juice.

Pour the custard mixture into the pie shell and bake for 40 to 45 minutes — or until the top of the custard is nicely browned and beginning to crack.

YIELD: 6 TO 8 CUTS OF PIE

Postscript

Cooks in a very great hurry can find on the grocery shelves a number of “convenience” products designed to save time and labor. With variations (according to brand name and the character of your market) they

come — boxed — in two general types: Instant Mashed Potatoes in the form of flakes or flour, to which you add milk and butter or margarine; and Scalloped Potatoes in the form of partially cooked slices or chunks, to which you add milk and butter or margarine. A third product, called Au Gratin Potatoes, is almost identical to scalloped except that it includes some powdered cheese.

These items *do* save fuss and preparation time; and if you are forced occasionally to rely on them, the judicious use of your favorite herbs and spices — and the addition of garlic, onions, or other savories — may help disguise the slightly unnatural, artificial, or cardboard-like taste of the potatoes. Don't deceive yourself into supposing, however, that these conveniences are the equivalent of the real thing — the glorious potato perfectly cooked in your own kitchen.

Dedication

For Beth Horrigan, a friend in deed

*The mission of Storey Publishing is to serve our customers by
publishing practical information that encourages
personal independence in harmony with the environment.*

Edited by Kim Foster

Cover illustration by Mary Rich

Cover design by Carol J. Jessop (Black Trout Design)

Copyright © 1990 by Storey Publishing, LLC

All rights reserved. No part of this bulletin may be reproduced without written permission from the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages or reproduce illustrations in a review with appropriate credits; nor may any part of this bulletin be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or other without written permission from the publisher.

The information in this bulletin is true and complete to the best of our knowledge. All recommendations are made without guarantee on the part of the author or Storey Publishing. The author and publisher disclaim any liability in connection with the use of this information. For additional information please contact Storey Publishing, 210 MASS MoCA Way, North Adams, MA 01247.

Storey books and bulletins are available for special premium and promotional uses and for customized editions. For further information, please call 1-800-793-9396.

Printed in the United States

Parker, Dorothy

Cooking with potatoes / by Dorothy Parker

A Storey Publishing Bulletin, A-115

ISBN 0-88266-601-0